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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 03/10/08

INDEX:

- (1) Question of revising SOFA lingers on (Mainichi)
- (2) U.S. military taskforce to work out recurrence prevention plan, focusing on sex crimes (Okinawa Times)
- (3) MOD conveys to U.S. one-year delay in implementation of environmental impact assessment regarding construction of alternate facility for Futenma airfield (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (4) Editorial: Cool-headed debate essential without reacting to provocation (Nikkei)
- (5) Japan, China to hold small-scale dialogue on Southeast Asia, Africa (Nikkei)

ARTICLES:

- (1) Question of revising SOFA lingers on

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Abridged)
March 9, 2008

By Mimori, Ueno, and Furumoto

It will be one month on March 10 since a U.S. Marine in Okinawa was arrested on suspicion of sexually assaulting a local junior high school girl. During this period, Tokyo and Washington have endeavored to prevent the incident from negatively affecting the

Japan-U.S. Forces of Status Agreement (SOFA), but they have yet to come up with any decisive steps to prevent a recurrence. Meanwhile, Tokyo and Washington have reiterated their intention to implement the Futenma relocation plan, which is supposed to reduce the burden on Okinawa, as was agreed upon as part of U.S. force realignment. The ongoing plans to relocate the U.S. Marines to Guam and fighter jet training clearly tell that U.S. force realignment is essentially designed to enhance U.S. deterrence.

A working team composed of some 50 representatives of the U.S. military, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Okinawa prefectural and municipal governments met at the MOFA Naha office on March 7. In the session, Okinawa prefectural police international crime division chief Satoshi Shimabukuro categorically said: "The idea of conducting joint patrols is unacceptable."

In the wake of the alleged sexual assault against a junior high school girl (Naha district prosecutors dropped charges against the U.S. Marine following the girl's decision to withdraw the accusation against him, but the U.S. military is still investigating the incident), the U.S. military implemented a lockdown prohibiting all U.S. service members in Okinawa from leaving their base. Despite that, U.S. service members continued committing misconduct, such as trespassing in a private house. As the next step, Tokyo and Washington have come up with the idea of joint patrols by Japanese police and the U.S. military.

But the Okinawa Prefectural Police objected to the plan. The reason is that the SOFA Japan-U.S. Joint Committee agreement provides that when both U.S. military police officers and Japanese law enforcement officers are at the same crime scene, an arrest must be made by the U.S. military.

TOKYO 00000627 002 OF 007

There is another plan to conduct joint patrols with regular military service members giving "guidance" instead of military police officers who have investigative authority. The prefectural police have also rejected this plan, saying that once U.S. military police officers arrive at a scene while a suspect is being questioned by Japanese police officers, he would be placed in U.S. military custody. Many think the SOFA must be revised in order to conduct joint patrols.

Reviewing the SOFA is the last thing the governments of Japan and the United States want. They fear that once the pact with Japan is revised, it would have endless implications, affecting agreements with other countries. The U.S. military's refusal to hand the suspects of the 1995 schoolgirl rape over to Japan before indictment on the strength of the SOFA set off strong demand for the pact's revision. In the wake of the latest incident, Tokyo and Washington have desperately tried to make a clear distinction with the SOFA, explaining that the suspect was detained by the Japanese side.

When U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Japan on Feb. 27, she asked Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to bring the curtain down on the incident. The Rice visit has been followed by a number of cases of misconduct by U.S. service members, pushing the question of revising the SOFA to the forefront.

Frustrated, U.S. Consul General in Okinawa Kevin Maher held a press conference on March 6, in which he revealed a plan to deal with the situation by improving the application of the pact, saying: "If there are points that are not clear over the question of which side will make arrests, I think that can be made clear in talks of the U.S.-Japan Joint Committee." Maher also said: "That will not lead to a review of the SOFA."

The Foreign Ministry is reluctant to even improve the application of the pact, with one official saying: "Joint patrols have been conducted since 1994 in areas near Yokosuka Naval Base, but the Kanagawa Prefectural Police have not complained about the practice."

Between fiscal 2002 and 2006, U.S. service members were involved in 9,193 incidents and accidents across Japan. Of them 5,193 cases, or

56 PERCENT , took place in Okinawa. A senior Okinawa prefectural police officer said: "The U.S. military's top priority is protecting American citizens. Even if the two governments decide to improve the application of the agreement, that would not be implemented out in the field. Conducting joint patrols is an armchair plan." There is growing momentum to revise the SOFA.

Apart from the two governments' efforts to prevent crimes by U.S. servicemen in Japan that are akin to a cat-and-mouse game, U.S. force realignment is making steady headways.

The U.S. Marine Corps command and some 8,000 Marines will be relocated from Okinawa to Guam, which is one of the areas whose base functions will be significantly strengthened as part of U.S. force realignment.

When we visited the island in February, 18 spots on Andersen Air Force Base were under construction. A huge hangar for B-22 stealth bombers has already been constructed. Construction work for a hangar for Global Hawk unmanned reconnaissance aircraft has also begun. The nuclear-powered submarine Ohio refitted with Tomahawk cruise

TOKYO 00000627 003 OF 007

missiles has also been deployed to Apra Naval Base.

Enhancing base functions is aimed at turning Guam into a fortress to counter China's rapid military buildup, according to a senior MOD official. The Japanese government will contribute 2.8 billion dollars (approximately 290 billion yen) for the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps headquarters from Okinawa to Guam. In addition, Japan will contribute 3.29 billion dollars (approximately 340 billion yen) for constructing military housing on the island.

In return, the U.S. military will increase joint exercises with Japan on Guam. The relocation of the U.S. Marines, which is ostensibly designed to alleviate the burden on Okinawa, is actually a step to integrate the U.S. military with the Self-Defense Forces with an eye on China.

Relocating F-15 training is another step to "lessen the burden on Okinawa." Since last March, F-15s based at Kadena Air Base have conducted training at four ASDF bases in mainland Japan for a total of 14 days.

But according to the Kadena base affairs division, greater noise levels were recorded on 11 days of those 14 days. Kadena base has 53 F-15 fighters, and of them, two to five jets took part in the training each time. Noise levels have not been reduced, because training is carried out by the remaining aircraft.

Five additional training sessions were conducted at bases on mainland Japan, which did not have direct bearing on Okinawa. Relocation is not designed to alleviate the burden on Okinawa but to increase Japan-U.S. joint training.

Before leaving his post, USFJ Commander Lt. Gen. Bruce Wright Bruce called on Defense Minister Ishiba on February 21 and praised the significance of training relocation as increasing the interoperability of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

(2) U.S. military taskforce to work out recurrence prevention plan, focusing on sex crimes

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 1) (Full)
March 8, 2008

In the wake of an Okinawa-based U.S. serviceman's (alleged) rape of a junior high school girl, U.S. Forces Japan's sexual assault prevention and response task force will work out a recurrence prevention plan in April, sources revealed yesterday. The Foreign Ministry held the 16th meeting of a working team at its Okinawa office to discuss measures to prevent incidents and accidents involving U.S. military personnel, and the U.S. military reported its plan in that closed-door meeting. Hideaki Kuramitsu, deputy chief of the Foreign Ministry's Okinawa office, presided over the meeting and revealed the task force's course of action in a press

briefing after that.

The working team also discussed arrest authority. In the meeting, Osamu Izawa, director of the Foreign Ministry Status of U.S. Forces Agreement Division, said this issue could be coordinated at the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee. Kuramitsu said Izawa indicated in the meeting that it would be possible to respond to this issue by improving the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement's implementation.

TOKYO 00000627 004 OF 007

According to Kuramitsu, the U.S. military outlined the task force that was set up last month, and the U.S. military also introduced its current educational programs. The task force, headed by Chief of Staff Stackpole at Yokota Air Base headquarters, is made up of about 15 military personnel. Kuramitsu said the task force would make the rounds of U.S. military bases in Japan to work out sexual crime prevention steps.

Kuramitsu said: "The Foreign Ministry will introduce local voices to the working team, and the office of the U.S. military's Okinawa area coordinator will convey the local views to the task force. The U.S. military says that they will go through a process of four to six weeks, so it will take at least more than one month (to announce a recurrence prevention plan)." The task force is expected arrive in Okinawa next week. The U.S. military gave no explanations about the task force's detailed schedule or how to prevent similar incidents, according to Kuramitsu.

Kuramitsu also said the working team discussed the advisability of conducting bilateral joint patrols and installing security cameras, as well as U.S. military personnel's off-base living. However, he did not reveal details about what the working team discussed in the meeting. "The working team unanimously agreed that we will not disclose details in order to exchange free and vigorous views," he said.

(3) MOD conveys to U.S. one-year delay in implementation of environmental impact assessment regarding construction of alternate facility for Futenma airfield

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Abridged)
March 9, 2008

Takumi Takimoto

The Ministry of Defense (MOD) as of March 8 informed the United States that an environmental impact assessment (EIS) regarding a sea area planned for the construction of an alternate facility for the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station will be completed, but one year behind the initial schedule. The reason is that it became impossible to conduct a winter survey, which MOD planned to conduct in February. This delay has forced MOD to delay filing an application for reclamation work, which was initially planned for August 2009, to around August 2010, several months before the next gubernatorial election. Despite this, MOD says the construction of an alternative facility will be completed by 2014 as agreed on by Japan and the U.S. by shortening work periods. But given possible difficulties in obtaining permission for reclamation work in terms of the gubernatorial election, the construction may be delayed. This delay may affect the implementation of overall realignment plans for U.S. forces.

During working-level talks of Japanese and U.S. officials held in Okinawa Prefecture on March 6, the Japanese side came up with a new schedule for an EIS and briefed the U.S. side about the current situation.

MOD's initial plan about the EIS was that it would launch a winter survey in February and would present, in August of this year, preparatory papers, a next-stage step that would come after a manual for an EIS is prepared, in the way in which the results of the past

TOKYO 00000627 005 OF 007

environment surveys would be included.

However, Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima pointed out flaws in the EIS manual in remarks attached to the manual and called on MOD to rewrite the manual. In order to faithfully respond to the governor's advice, MOD decided to rewrite the manual, even though doing so is not obligatory in view of the EIS proceedings, and MOD supplemented the manual.

MOD wanted to launch the winter survey in February in the form of a prior survey while rewriting the manual, but the prefectural government did not budge from the position that it would not allow MOD to conduct any survey before the manual was completed; as a result, MOD was unable to conduct the survey in February.

(4) Editorial: Cool-headed debate essential without reacting to provocation

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
March 9, 2008

We can't call Sea Shepherd a group of environmental activists, for they attacked the Japanese research whaling ship Nisshin Maru and injured some crew members. They have repeated attacks against ships and acts of piracy, both of which have nothing to do with protection of the environment. This outlaw group should be clearly distinguished from many other environmental organizations that are working in earnest and lawfully for environmental conservation.

A recent series of acts by the group is apparently in violation of international law. In order to prevent even more serious damage from being caused in the future, it is imperative to thoroughly investigate and shed light on those acts as habitual acts of piracy. The challenge for the Japanese government in this context is how to call on the U.S., where the group's headquarters is located, Australia, where the group has a base for its activities, and the Netherlands, where the group has registered its ship, to cooperate on an investigation as well as measures to prevent recurrences.

The governments of the U.S., Australia, and the Netherlands are all opposed to whaling, but Japan should ask them to handle the recent acts of attacks by Sea Shepherd against the Japanese vessel as a criminal case. Sea Shepherd has made its unlawful acts look like a noble mission and has used them to raise funds for their activities. But Japan must not be caught in such a trap.

We have asserted that the whaling issue must be discussed from a scientific point of view without any assumptions or mud-slinging for the sake of protecting and using the marine ecosystem in a sustainable manner. After much discussion in the past years, the International Whaling Commission's IWC) Scientific Committee has created a mechanism for commercial whaling.

This mechanism consists of the revised management scheme (RMS) and the revised management procedures (RMP). The purpose of the mechanism is to allow commercial whaling under a rational system of monitoring and in that way to preserve individual living creatures as well as the overall marine ecosystem. Even scientists from antiwhaling countries are supportive of this mechanism, but because of opposition from antiwhaling countries, the IWC has yet to adopt the mechanism in its general meeting. Consequently commercial whaling has yet to be resumed. No one can tell when it will be

TOKYO 00000627 006 OF 007

resumed.

Some antiwhaling countries have declared that even if waters around the world are abundant in whales, they will prevent even a single whale from being taken. Given this, it is very difficult indeed to make all the IWC members convinced by proper logic. But now is a crucial stage. As a result of a full-fledged survey conducted to grasp the actual numbers of whales, global environmental organizations are showing an interest in a rational whaling system.

The only way for Japan to follow is to resolutely turn away unlawful

provocation and be patient enough to persuade, based on the scientific idea of coexistence, as well as the idea of tolerance, the countries that make unreasonable requests. Narrow-mindedness unable to understand heterogeneous culture and intolerance will ebb away.

(5) Japan, China to hold small-scale dialogue on Southeast Asia, Africa

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2008

The Japanese and Chinese governments have launched a small-scale policy dialogue focused on the subject of policy toward Southeast Asia and Africa, as well as official development assistance (ODA). The two governments will create a framework for dialogue for cooperation on issues that are not bilateral, aiming at establishing a strategic and reciprocal relationship between Tokyo and Beijing. Most of the issues on which the two countries will try to cooperate are in areas in which they have competed and are at odds over their interests. As confrontation has continued between the investigative authorities of the two countries over the row over poisoned Chinese-made dumplings, it will take time for the dialogue to produce results.

The two governments have reached an agreement on the establishment of a "Japan-China Policy Dialogue on the Mekong," in which they will discuss relations with countries bordering the Mekong River, including Thailand and Cambodia. They are expected to hold a first meeting soon. Tokyo and Beijing last September held bureau-director-general-level consultations on policy toward Africa. Japan heard from China about the situation of its assistance for Africa, which accounts more than 40 PERCENT of its foreign assistance. Last November the two countries held a similar meeting in Beijing on ODA.

Japan and China have already initiated a cabinet-level economic dialogue. In addition, the two countries have regularly held strategic talks between vice foreign ministers. In the small-scale policy dialogue, the two sides will discuss issues for which little time is spent in the high-level dialogue and issues in which Tokyo and China have strong interests, as they are determined to work side by side in these areas.

For example, the development of the Mekong is also crucial for China. A senior Foreign Ministry official said: "In areas the two countries have proactively worked on, there are projects on which the two countries can work together."

However, since Japan and China have vied with each other to wield their influence over Southeast Asia and Africa, they might create

TOKYO 00000627 007 OF 007

the seeds of conflicts, rather than cooperation.

Japan hosted in January in Tokyo a foreign ministerial meeting of five Mekong countries, aiming at seeking to contain China, which has rapidly increased its presence in this region. In rivalry with Japan, which has held the Tokyo International Conference on African Development once every five years since 1993, China has held the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation once every three years.

The murkiness of China's foreign aid is a factor that prevents Japan from cooperating with Beijing. Although the Chinese government showed enthusiasm for a joint project on Africa policy, Tokyo called on Beijing to disclose further information on the grounds that it could not cooperate without adequate information.

The development of a small-scale policy dialogue will likely become a test to divine how far Japan and China will be able to act in concert as two Asian powers.

SCHIEFFER